

MONTANA WIC RETAILER NEWSLETTER



JANUARY 2007

VOL. 9, NO. 1

NOTES FROM TRISH

Many of you have worked with or spoken to Leyetta Way. Leyetta has moved on to a new position as a public relations specialist with the Montana Telecommunications Access Program in DPHHS. We wish her the best in her future endeavors.

Shannon Bartell is temporarily filling the position until we are able to hire a replacement.

We've received complaints that stores are not accepting the WIC checks printed on the old check stock. This check stock is still valid, and should be accepted until April 1, 2007.

Remember that some participants are issued up to three months of checks at a time. A good rule of thumb is that if the dates on the checks are valid, the checks are also valid.

More compliance buys have been made, and we've learned from the experiences. More cashiers are marking off the food items as they are being processed. More errors are being caught.

The good news - every time we

tried to use an early check, it was caught by the cashier. And even better, the cashier was always gracious about explaining why they couldn't take the check.

No where were we given any 'attitude' by store staff, probably the biggest complaint we receive from participants. And this is after the cashiers dealt with out-of-date checks, wrong foods, missing foods, etc, from the compliance buy proxies. Good job out there!

Cereal still seems to be a problem. A majority of cashiers don't check the type of cereal being purchased to ensure it is WIC approved, and they don't look at the number of ounces being purchased. Both should be verified against the check and the Approved Foods List, if you have any questions.

Another problem has come to our attention. Pre-signed checks are being accepted. You may NOT accept pre-signed checks -- you have no idea if those checks were stolen and the signatures carefully traced. Once again, signatures are not being verified. You are within your rights to refuse to accept WIC checks without the ID Packet. We strongly recommend that you put this into practice.

Congratulations to Norma of the Kalispell Rosauers for a perfect buy. During a compliance buy, Norma asked us twice for the ID Packet, first to check the name was on the packet and the second time to compare the signatures; she caught the erroneous foods; and she asked about missing food items. We appreciate your efforts to do things right, Norma!

We've received some calls asking for the 'WIC Approved' shelf talkers. We do not supply these at this time. My understanding is that these are provided by the item's food distributor.

Please remember that Appendix B of your WIC agreement is a list of the WIC foods that must be kept in stock **at all times**, in the minimal amounts shown.

Formula seems to be the item most likely to be out of stock. We are concerned about the formula which might go out of date in areas with small infant populations. Please request a stocking exemption if you have trouble selling the formula in a timely manner. You are still required to give us formula prices on the quarterly price survey.

NEW FOOD LISTS

New food lists have been created and distributed to all WIC authorized retailers. Laminated copies were issued to all retailers to aid with the frequent use of the forms.

Some WIC participants may come to the WIC clinic once every three months. It is possible that they have NOT received a copy of the new food list. We ask that you allow a three-month transitional period in which both the 2005-2006 and the 2007-2008 food lists may be used. March 31st will be the last date the 2005-2006 list may be used.

The only new item added to the food list is Kellogg’s Rice Krispies. Kellogg’s increased the iron to the level needed for WIC purchase. Be aware that Kellogg’s Organic Rice Krispies are NOT approved for purchase.

We also changed the description for eggs so that any brand, white or brown, are allowable.

We understand that participants will ask to ‘borrow’ a cashier’s copy to shop, and fail to return it. If you desire a small amount of non-laminated copies for the use of your WIC customers, please contact us at 800-433-4298, option 2, or 444-4746.

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NEW ISSUES

It’s come to our attention that Meyenberg goat’s milk is now out in a powdered format. This is NOT a WIC-approved product. Only the liquid in cans and quarts are WIC-

approved.

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THANK YOU, RETAILERS!

Again, many thanks to Norma of the Kalispell Rosauers for an absolutely perfect compliance buy. You were our first, and hopefully not the last, perfect buy! And thanks to the Rosauers’ training, which educated Norma in correct transaction procedures.

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The following stores submitted the first perfect price surveys received in this office. Thank you for your time and efforts!

- Albertson’s #2010 - Missoula
- Albertson’s #2019 - Lewistown
- Albertson’s #2033 - Cut Bank
- Allen’s Manix Store - Augusta
- Big Horn IGA - Hardin
- Crow Mercantile - Crow Agency
- Edward’s Grocery - White Sulphur Springs
- Madison Foods - Ennis
- Malta Best Way Foods - Malta
- People’s Market - Darby
- Rod’s Harvest Foods - St Ignatius
- Super 1 Foods - Stevensville
- Van’s IGA - Bozeman
- Van’s IGA East - Great Falls
- Wal-Mart Supercenter #1901 - Butte
- Wal-Mart Supercenter #1956 - Billings

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WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT WIC?

WIC is the ‘Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children’. WIC is funded by the US Department of Agriculture, and is implemented in Montana through the Montana

Department of Public Health and Human Services.

The purpose of the Montana WIC Program is to provide nutrition education and supplemental foods **at no cost** to eligible persons.

- ‘Eligible persons’ are defined as:
- ✓ Pregnant, breastfeeding, or postpartum women, or
 - ✓ Infants (to their first birthday), or
 - ✓ Children (to their fifth birthday) AND
 - ✓ Living within the boundaries of the State of Montana AND
 - ✓ Meeting the financial limitations of 185% of the current federally-determined ‘poverty level’, or
 - ✓ Participating in an adjunctively-eligible program, such as Medicaid, Food Stamps, or TANF, AND
 - ✓ Having a nutritional risk.

WIC-approved foods must meet the federal nutritional requirements for each food type, as specified in 7CFR Ch 11, 246.10. The State Office reviews all foods to ensure they meet the nutritional requirement and then verifies the food is available across the state. A statewide taste test is conducted of foods meeting these criteria. Foods passing the taste test by a simple majority are added to the pictured approved foods list.

For the convenience of WIC retailers and participants, a pictured “Approved Foods List” is available through the Montana WIC Program. This list contains the types, and in some cases, the brand names of the food items approved for WIC purchase in Montana. If a type of food has

brand names listed, such as cereal or juice, **only** those brand names may be purchased with WIC checks. The approved foods list is available to all WIC participants and retailers.

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ORGANIC FOODS

The following are the **ONLY** organic foods that **MAY** be purchased with WIC checks:

CEREAL:
Kellogg’s Organic Frosted Mini-Wheats

CHEESE:
ANY cheese meeting the food list guidelines AND whose label specifies the cheese is pasteurized.

NO RAW MILK CHEESE may be purchased.

EGGS:
Any eggs; large; white or brown; “AA” or “A”.

JUICE:
Any grapefruit, orange, pineapple or tomato juice meeting the food list guidelines.

MILK:
*Horizon: 2%, 1%, Fat Free
Lifeline Farms: Whole, Reduced Fat
Naturally Preferred: 2%, 1%, Fat Free
O Organics: Whole
Organic Valley: 2%, 1%, Non Fat
Safeway Organic: All
Stremicks Heritage Foods Organic: All*

PEANUT BUTTER:
Any peanut butter meeting the

food list guidelines.

If you wish us to review an organic product that may be eligible, please sent a copy of the product label to:
*Kim Mondy, RD
Montana WIC Program / DPHHS
Cogswell Bldg, Rm 305
P O Box 202951
Helena, MT 59620-2951.*

We will notify you if that item meets federal requirements.

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RETAILER UPDATES

“Welcome” to the following retailers new to the WIC Program since the last newsletter:

Havre - Wal-Mart #4247
Miles City - Wal-Mart #2608.

The following stores have changed owners, and have continued with WIC:

Eureka - Stein’s Market (formerly JB’s Shopping Center)

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COMMON QUESTIONS

Can we take a WIC check on the “Last Day to Use”, or must the check be cashed before that date?

You may take a check on the “Last Day to Use”. You have thirty days after that date to process and deposit the WIC check. Do NOT accept checks after the “Last Day to Use”. We will refuse to reimburse for such checks.

Please remember that the cashier fills in the “Actual Date of Sale” on the new (blue) checks.

A participant wants to buy their lactose-reduced milk in half-gallons. Is this allowed?

YES. Two half-gallons are an allowable substitution for one gallon of milk. To the best of our knowledge, lactose-reduced milk does not come in gallon containers.

Now that chocolate milk is an allowable WIC food, can everybody buy it?

NO. Chocolate milk must be printed on the check for the participant to purchase it. Only the amount printed on the check, either one gallon or one half-gallon, may be purchased.

Can a WIC participant buy sharp or extra sharp cheddar cheese?

YES.

Can a WIC participant buy Western Family mozzarella balls?

YES. WIC cheese must be a domestic cheese (made in USA).

The wording for eggs has changed on the new food list. Is any type of eggs allowable now?

YES. This includes organic eggs, omega 3, cage-free, etc.

A participant wants to buy the 25.8-oz cans of infant formula, saying that we have allowed it in the past. Is it an allowable size substitution?

NO. When it comes to infant formula, only the size printed on the check is the allowable size. Feel free to refer any complaints

from participants to me.

Kellogg’s Rice Krispies is a new authorized cereal, does that also include the Organic Rice Krispies?

NO. The Organic Rice Krispies cereal does not meet the required iron fortification.

The food list says no peanut butter with honey. Does this include honey-roasted peanut butter?

NO. Honey-roasted peanut butter is an allowable WIC food item.

Can a WIC participant use their store card in a WIC purchase?

YES. To not allow the use of the card is a form of discrimination, subject to program sanctions.

PARTICIPANTS COMPLAIN...

... that they purchased the large cans of infant formula in the past, and now suddenly it is no longer allowed.

Only the size of cans specified on the WIC checks should be purchased. Do not allow any size substitutions for formula. To do so creates a precedent, and bad feelings with the customers.

WIC OFFICE CLOSED

The Montana WIC Program is scheduled to be closed on the following day:

Mon, February 19, Presidents’ Day

INFORMATION TO SHARE?

Do you have information or suggestions that you would like to share with other WIC retailers? Send it to Trish, and it will be included in the next newsletter. You can mail it to:

*Trish Kurek, Program Specialist
Montana WIC Program / DPHHS
Cogswell Bldg, Rm 305
P O Box 202951
Helena MT 59620-2951.*

If you have Internet access, you can use the e-mail address, “tkurek@mt.gov”. You can also fax information to 406-444-0239.

The ‘Montana WIC Retailer Newsletter’ is targeted for distribution in January, April, July, and October.

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA) PROHIBITS DISCRIMINATION IN ALL ITS PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES ON THE BASIS OF RACE, COLOR, NATIONAL ORIGIN, GENDER, RELIGION, AGE, DISABILITY, OR POLITICAL BELIEFS. (NOT ALL PROHIBITED BASES APPLY TO ALL PROGRAMS.) PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES WHO REQUIRE ALTERNATIVE MEANS FOR COMMUNICATION OF PROGRAM INFORMATION (BRAILLE, LARGE PRINT, AUDIOTAPES, ETC.) SHOULD CONTACT USDA’S TARGET CENTER AT (202) 720-2600 (VOICE AND TDD.)

TO FILE A COMPLAINT OF DISCRIMINATION, WRITE USDA, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS, ROOM 326-W, WHITTEN BUILDING, 14TH AND INDEPENDENCE AVENUE, SW, WASHINGTON D.C. 20250-9410 OR CALL (202) 720-5964 (VOICE AND TDD.) USDA IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER AND EMPLOYER.

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